

CLAIMS:

1. A distributed speech recognition system for recognizing a speech input signal; the system including at least one client station and a server station;

the client station including means for receiving the speech input signal from a user and means for transferring a signal representative of the received speech to the server station via the public Internet; and

the server station including means for receiving the speech equivalent signal from the public Internet and a large/huge vocabulary speech recognizer for recognizing the received speech equivalent signal;

characterized in that the client station includes a local speech recognizer and a speech controller; the speech controller being operative to direct at least part of the speech input signal to the local speech recognizer and, in dependence on an activation or speech routing voice command recognized by the local recognizer, selectively directing a part of the speech input signal via the public Internet to the server station.

15 2. The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the local speech recognizer of the client station is a limited speech recognizer, such as a small vocabulary or keyword recognizer.

3. The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the speech controller is operative to 20 send, in response to recognizing the activation command, an activation instruction to the server and to direct the speech input signal to the server station.

4. The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the recognizer is operative to recognize at least one spoken command/control instruction relating to the operation of the 25 local client station and the speech controller is operative to issue a machine control instruction corresponding to the recognized command/control instruction to a station controller of the local client station.

5. The system as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the system includes a plurality of server stations; the speech controller being operative to selectively direct the speech input signal to at least one associated server in response to recognizing a corresponding speech routing command.

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6. The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the speech recognizer of the client station is a large vocabulary speech recognizer; the speech controller being operative to direct at least a part of the speech input signal to the server station if a performance indicator for a recognition result of the speech recognizer in the local client station is below a predetermined threshold;

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the server station being operative to transfer a recognized word sequence back to the client station;

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the client station including a selector for selecting a recognized word sequence from the word sequences respectively recognized by the recognizer in the client station and recognizer in the server station.

7. A method of recognizing a speech input signal in a distributed system including at least one client station and a server station; the method including:

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receiving in the client station the speech input signal from a user;

recognizing at least part of the speech input signal in the client station;

selectively directing a signal representative of a part of the speech input signal via the public Internet from the client station to the server station; the directing being in dependence on an activation or speech routing voice command recognized by the recognizer in the client station;

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receiving the speech equivalent signal in the server station from the public Internet; and

recognizing the received speech equivalent signal in the server station using a large/huge vocabulary speech recognizer.